

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 6631

CALCUTTAT FOR YOUR ACTION/ INFO.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CALCUTTA 1103

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJ: STATE ELECTIONS: PRE-ELECTORAL SITUATION IN BIHAR
AND ORISSA

1. AT THIS STAGE IN PRE-ELECTORAL MANEOUVERING JANATA IS
EXPECTED TO DO WELL IN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN BOTH ORISSA
AND BIHAR. QUESTION OF CURRENT CONCERN IS WHO WILL GET
CONTROL OF CONGRESS AND JANATA PARTIES IN THE TWO STATES.

2. IN ORISSA OBSERVERS EXPECT THAT JANATA WILL REPEAT ITS

VICTORY OF THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS, WHN JANATA/CFD WON
15, CPM 1, CONGRESS 4 AND A CONGRESS-SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT
1. INDEED JUST BEFORE DISSOLUTION OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
DEFLECTIONS HAD ALREADY COST CONGRESS GOVERNMENT ITS MAJORITY
THERE. WE HAVE HEARD THAT WITH MERGER OF CFD INTO JANATA
MRS. SATPATHY HOLDS OUT SOME HOPE OF BECOMING CHIEF MINISTER.
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BUT MOST PEOPLE CONSIDER THIS HIGHLY UNLIKELY, AS SHE IS
NOT POPULAR, AND IS STILL ASSOCIATED WITH THE EMERGENCY IN
ORISSA. SOME OBSERVERS ARGUE THAT MRGER OF CFD WITH JANATA
GIVES HER EVEN LESS LEVERAGE AND THAT SHE MAY REJOIN CON-
GRESS IF OPPONENTS OF MRS. GANDHI WIN CONTROL OF PARTY.

3. BIJU PATNAIK SEEMS FULLY IN CHARGE OF THE ORISSA JANATA
AND DURING HIS CURRENT VISIT TO BHUBANESWAR IS EXPECTED TO

DRAW UP LISTS OF PARTY'S CANDIDATES. HE IS QUOTED IN PRESS AS RULING OUT INCLUSION IN JANATA LISTS OF MLA'S WHO RECENTLY DESERTED CONGRESS FOR JANATA, WHICH LEAVES THE 26 CONGRESS MLAS WHO RECENTLY CAME OVER WITH NO WHERE TO GO. ALTHOUGH PATNAIK ALSO REPORTEDLY SAID, "THE QUESTION OF ELECTING THE LEADER OF THE JANATA LEGISLATURE PAGLY WILL BE DECIDED DEMOCRATICALLY AFTER THE ELECTION," IT IS GENERALLY ASSUMED THAT PATNAIK HIMSELF WILL MAKE THE DECISION. HE DID NOT RULE OUT HIS OWN RETURN TO ORISSA POLITICS, BUT EVEN IF HE DOES NOT BECOME CHIEF MINISTER, HE IS EXPECTED TO RULE THE STATE THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY.

4. JANATA'S CHANCES FOR SUCCESS IN ORISSA ARE INCREASED BY SPLITS WITHIN CONGRESS. OUTGOING CHIEF MINISTER BINAYAK ACHARYA IS NOW BEING CHALLENGED FOR PARTY LEADERSHIP BY A WING OF PARTY WHICH HOLDS HIM RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONGRESS ROUT BECAUSE OF HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH SANJAY GANDHI. ACHARYA SEEMS TO HAVE SPLIT WITH HIS ERSTWHILE ALLY, J.B. PATNAIK, FORMER DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER AND TO FACE OPPOSITION ALSO FROM THE REMNANTS OF THE PRO-CPI GROUP WITHIN THE CONGRESS. NEVERTHELESS IT NOW SEEMS THAT ACHARYA AND HIS ALLIES WILL BE IN A POSITION TO NAME CONGRESS CANDIDATES IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS.

5. IN BIHAR TOO THE MERGED JANATA/CFD IS EXPECTED TO SWEEP THE POLLS, BUT IT MAY FACE MORE PROBLEMS FROM INTERNAL DISUNITY THAN FROM THE DIVIDED AND DEMORALIZED CONGRESS. THE MERGER OF THE CFD WITH JANATA IS LIKELY TO IMPROVE FURTHER
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JANATA'S IMAGE AND PROSPECTS, BUT IF MANY CONGRESS DEFECTORS TRY TO ENTER THE PARTY THROUGH THE CFD, JANATA COULD FACE DIFFICULTIES. THE STATE STUDENTS' STRUGGLE COMMITTEE, WHICH WAS THE BACKBONE OF JP'S MOVEMENT, HAS WARNED THAT IT WOULD OPPOSE GIVING TICKETS TO RECENT DEFECTORS, AND ESPECIALLY CANDIDATES WHO HAVE CORRUPT IMAGES.

6. THE BIHAR CONGRESS IS IN MUCH WORSE SHAPE, HOWEVER, THE ENTIRE STATE PARTY EXECUTIVE RESIGNED ON MAY 1, AND THE PARTY IS NOW SAID TO BE AWAITING THE RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE BEFORE CHOOSING ITS STATE LEADERS. IN THE MEANTIME RAM LAKHAN SINGH YADAV, AN IMPORTANT LEADER IN THE STATE PARTY SINCE 1969 WHO HAD RECENTLY BEEN QUARRELLING WITH ITS LEADERSHIP, HAS DECLARED HIS CANDIDACY FOR STATE PARTY PRESIDENT. HE IS REPORTED TO HAVE JOINED FORCES WITH THE OPPONENTS OF MRS. GANDHI IN THE AICC, INCLUDING S.S. RAY. WHILE MOST OBSERVERS EXPECT THAT CONGRESS WILL BE BADLY BEATEN IN THIS ELECTION, SOME THINK THAT IF THE PARTY CAN PULL ITSELF TOGETHER UNDER A POPULAR FIGURE LIKE YADAV, IT MIGHT BE A FORCE IN BIHAR IN THE FUTURE.

7. THE CPI, WHICH CLAIMED TO HAVE ITS LARGEST ORGANIZATION IN BIHAR, IS NOT EXPECTED TO DO MUCH BETTER IN THE ASSEMBLY ELECTION THAN IT DID IN THE LOK SABHA POLL, WHEN IT WENT FROM FIVE SEATS TO NONE. (IN THE DISSOLVED ASSEMBLY THE CPI HAD 32 SEATS.) ALTHOUGH THE OUTGOING CONGRSS LEGISLATIVE PARTY EXECUTIVE RECOMMENDED AN ALLIANCE WITH THE CPI, OBSERVERS CONSIDER IT UNLIKELY TO COME ABOUT. IN ISOLATION AND DISREPUTE, THE BIHAR CPI IS EXPECTED TO FARE BADLY.
KORN

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